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Identical letters dated 30 May 2007 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government I transmit to you herewith the statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. Fouad Siniora, concerning events in both the Nahr al-Barid camp and Tripoli, in the north of Lebanon, and developments in the situation, with regard to all security and humanitarian concerns (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly under agenda item 13, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Caroline **Ziade**
Charge d'affaires a.i.

07-36376 (E) 010607 010607

Annex to the identical letters dated 30 May 2007 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement by His Excellency the Prime Minister, Mr. Fouad Siniora

28 May 2007

On Saturday 10 May, elements of Fatah al-Islam attacked Lebanese Army sites in Tripoli and brutally killed 32 soldiers, most of whom were off duty at the time. On the basis of investigations and the confessions of some suspects who were arrested, it appears that Fatah al-Islam is behind the terrorist bombings of two buses in the 'Ayn 'Alaq area on 12 February, leading to the death of a number of civilians. It also appears that this organization is responsible for several thefts. The recent clashes coincided with three explosions last week in Beirut and Aley, and preliminary investigations indicate the possible involvement of the same organization.

This is not a war between Lebanon and the Palestinians: it is a war that has been launched against the Lebanese and the Palestinians equally. We are responding to an extremist group known by the name of Fatah al-Islam, the ranks of which include terrorists of various nationalities who entered Lebanon surreptitiously and assembled in the Nahr al-Barid camp, which they used as a base for their operations and effectively took over, against the will of the residents. The Palestinian people inside the camp, who asked repeatedly to leave the area, were, in effect, taken hostage. The Lebanese and Palestinian peoples were victims of the practices and creed of this malicious group. It should be noted that the objectives and aspirations of this group bear no relation to Islam or Palestine.

The Palestinian Authority and the other Palestinian factions have openly condemned Fatah al-Islam and emphasized that there is no relation between it and Palestinian organizations operating in Palestine. Moreover, the different Palestinian factions have all publicly disavowed this terrorist group and, from the beginning, condemned the aggression to which the Lebanese army was subjected. Furthermore, they are committed to helping the Lebanese Government eliminate this phenomenon.

The League of Arab States and the United Nations Security Council have both issued strong statements in support of the efforts of the Lebanese Government. Both statements described the organization which Lebanon is confronting precisely as a terrorist organization, with no relation to Islam or the Palestinian cause.

With the assistance of local Palestinian groups, we have requested Fatah al-Islam to surrender and undergo a fair trial, instead of causing further confrontations and violence.

The Lebanese Government emphasizes its full commitment to the just Palestinian cause as well as its solidarity with the Palestinian people. Since it was formed, the present Government has made serious efforts to improve the living standards of Palestinian refugees in camps throughout Lebanon and has also worked hard to ensure the support of the international community for its plan to improve

conditions in those camps. Unfortunately, Fatah al-Islam has obstructed these efforts through destabilizing and exacerbating conditions in the camps.

We are concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Nahr al-Barid camp and have taken the necessary steps to address this situation, by seeking to suspend hostilities and allow civilians to leave the camp. Moreover, we are employing the utmost caution in dealing with the situation, in order to avoid any unnecessary loss of life. However, it should be pointed out that Fatah al-Islam elements are firing from civilian areas and their snipers are targeting any civilian who attempts to leave the camp; the intention here is clearly to use refugees as human shields, contrary to ethical standards and the most basic principles of human rights and international humanitarian law.

According to our sources and those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), it appears that the great majority of residents have in fact left the camp and are being taken care of by the various organs of the Lebanese Government, which has mobilized all of its human and material resources in order to provide aid to persons displaced from the locations where they sought refuge in the camps and the neighbouring areas. We are also working to send humanitarian supplies to those refugees who remain inside the camp.

The international community today is called upon more than ever before to address its responsibilities towards the Palestinian refugees and Palestinian refugee camps. In the present situation it must fulfil its obligations, with our great appreciation, to provide humanitarian support in order to reduce the severity of the situation of the innocent civilians who are suffering as a result of these regrettable events.

We are fighting the terrorists in order to protect Lebanon and ensure the peace and security of all Lebanese, Palestinians and others living in Lebanon. No State in the world can allow its army and citizens to be the target of attacks, which can only be described as barbaric, within its borders, in particular by foreign fighters who have entered the country surreptitiously. The Lebanese Government and the Lebanese Army is making the utmost effort to address this threat decisively and cautiously. Any alternative to this decisive approach would have very serious consequences for Lebanon and the region, and could result in Lebanon becoming fertile ground for every terrorist or outlaw in the world. Lebanon rejects and condemns terrorism wherever it occurs and will not tolerate terrorism on its territory, under any circumstances.

With the backing and support of all sectors of the Lebanese people, the Lebanese army remains the sole legitimate authority with the right to use force as a last resort in order to defend the country's stability and the security of its citizens. Lebanon will not be a land of lawbreaking and impunity. Lebanon suffered for 40 years because of hesitation, disregard and interference in its affairs. We will maintain our position and emphasize that our country will remain a free, sovereign and stable land in which citizens enjoy security and the rule of law. We also mention the heritage of Lebanon and its commitment to the principles of coexistence, plurality, freedom, democracy, tolerance, openness and moderation. We will live up to the present letter.